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Stray

Stray · Notes ·

from

Famous · Musicians ·

Selected and Arranged by

G. H. Churchill

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Stray Notes.

If men of genius only knew what love their works inspire; if they only realized with what intense, concentrated devotion some hearts yearn toward them,— how they would rejoice to receive and surround themselves with such kindred spirits; and how such worship would console them for the bitter envy, petty hatred, and ceaseless indifference which they meet with everywhere!

Berlioz.

Let all that is called life be sacrificed to noble aims and to a sanctuary of art.

Beethoven.

Ye peddlers in art, do ye not sink into the earth when ye are reminded of the words of Beethoven on his dying bed, "I believe I am yet but at the beginning"? or Jean Paul, "It seems to me that I have written nothing as yet"?

Schumann.

Chopin had that reverential worship for art which characterized the first masters of the Middle Ages, but in expression and bearing he was more simply modern and less ecstatic. As for them, so art was for him, a high and holy avocation. Like them, he was proud of his election for it, and honored it with devout piety. *Liszt.*

Instrumentation in the present day, therefore, is like a fashionable foreign language, which many people affect to speak without having learned it, and therefore speak without properly understanding it, and with a great many barbarisms. *Berlioz.*

The intellectual realm is the most precious in my eyes, and far above all temporal and spiritual monarchies. *Beethoven.*

Reflection, and plenty of it, is absolutely necessary before undertaking anything; and when once your mind is made up, you should strike to such purpose that all obstacles fall to pieces before you. There are only two means of strength in this world — prudence and strength. *Berlioz.*

Broad paths are open to every endeavor, and a sympathetic recognition is assured to every one who consecrates his art to the divine services of a conviction of a consciousness. *Liszt.*

I find in the frequent and shrill demands of superficial musical dilettanti for "Melody, melody!" a confirmation of the belief that they derive their idea of melody from musical works in which, besides the melody, complete lack of melody occurs, which makes what they think melodious appear so precious.

Wagner.

Progress is made by work alone, and not by talking. *Mendelssohn.*

The most important thing for a musician is to refine his "inner ear."

Schumann.

For me there is no pleasure so great as to pursue my art. *Beethoven.*

Simplicity, truth, and nature are the great fundamental principles of the beautiful in all artistic creation. *Glück.*

I only wish I could impress on every friend of music, and on great men in particular, the same depth of musical sympathy and profound appreciation of Mozart's inimitable music that I myself feel and enjoy. *Haydn.*

Contact with the powers of others calls forth new ones in ourselves.

Weber.

My language is understood all over the world. *Haydn.*

Harmony, utterly unknown to antiquity and its endlessly rich developments and employment in polyphonism, are the discoveries and the peculiar work of recent centuries. *Wagner.*

A man with fine capabilities has the absolute duty imposed on him of becoming something really superior. *Mendelssohn.*

True virtuosity gives us something more than mere flexibility and execution: a man may mirror his own nature in it. *Schumann.*

Success in a small style often leads to onesidedness and mannerism. *Schumann.*

Is it not the bounden duty of those who love art and glory in her beauty to guard the liberty of the human mind, and to prosecute the culprit who violates its unwritten laws, and denounce him, with all possible wrath, crying, "Your crime is ridiculous,—despair! Your stupidity is culpable,—die! Be thou rejected, derided, accused of men. Despair and Die."

Berlioz.

The more truth and perfection are sought after, the more necessary are precision and exactness. *Glück.*

Just as a writer who speaks to the heart is sure to please, so is a composer who gives the player something which he can play and enjoy himself, and make others enjoy too. *Zelter.*

Art is always and everywhere the secret confessions as well as the undying monuments of its time. *Marx.*

Art,— who comprehends it? with whom can I discuss this mighty goddess. *Beethoven.*

Believe me, there is no greater delight than the completely uncritical frame of mind of the artist while composing. *Wagner.*

My idea is, that music ought to move the heart with sweet emotion which a pianist will never effect by mere scrambling, thundering, and arpeggios,— at least not from me.

C. P. E. Bach.

Art has no business to imitate the unlucky octaves and fifths of life — it should rather conceal them. *Schumann.*

I consider the publication of a work as a serious matter (at least it ought to be so); for I maintain that no one should publish unless they are resolved to appear as an author for the rest of their life. *Mendelssohn.*

Emotion suits women only; music should strike fire from the soul of a man. *Beethoven.*

Art is indeed so comprehensive, and everything in life is so closely connected with it, that whoever loves and fosters it will daily find in it new sources of enjoyment and new incitements to study. The most experienced teacher of art must be a constant learner. *Wieck.*

He who is anxious to preserve his originality is in danger of losing it. *Schumann.*

Even the most brilliant talent may lose its effects by too great familiarity. *Beethoven.*

One must make up one's mind that, except for certain chance circumstances and certain association with the inferior arts,— always more or less degrading,— music is not productive in the commercial sense of the word; it addresses itself too exclusively to exceptionally intelligent society; it demands too much preparation, too many appliances. There must, therefore, of necessity be a sort of honorable ostracism for those who cultivate it, without being in any way preoccupied by foreign interests. *Berlioz.*

When truth is sought, it must be varied in accordance with the subject we have to work out, and the greater beauties of melody and harmony become defects and imperfections when out of place. *Glück.*

How seldom do we meet with a proper amount of sympathy and knowledge, honesty and courage, in a critic,— four qualities which they ought to possess. It is, therefore, very sad for the realm of music that criticism in so many respects so useful, should often be the occupation of heads by no means gifted with these qualities. *C. P. E. Bach.*

I do not wish to take possession of the road to prosperity by force. *Weber.*

Whoever understands me knows that I owe much to Sebastian Bach, that I have studied him thoroughly and well, and that I acknowledged him only as my model. *Haydn.*

To be a true artist you must be a true man. *Weber.*

Music alone speaks at once to the imagination, the mind, the heart, and the senses; and it is the reaction of the senses on the mind and heart, and *vice-versa*, that produces the impression felt by those who are gifted with the necessary organization, but of which others, the barbarians, can know nothing. *Berlioz.*

Genius is always endowed with its own sacred intuitions! Poetry ever reveals to her chosen the secrets of her wild domain! *Liszt.*

A man's merit consists only in the amount of industry and exertion he bestows upon the object he desires to attain. He that is gifted by nature with talent or genius, has no right to look upon these gifts as his own desert, but as an obligation which Heaven has imposed upon him, to cultivate them so far as to enable him to perform all that may be reasonably expected from the talent he possesses. *Plaidy.*

An artist can have abstract ideas, but he cannot serve opinion without making his vocation impossible; for art, like the solution of all opinion, lies in the feeling of humanity. *Liszt.*

All things that we do are but first attempts. Woe to the artist who sits down to his labor with the conviction that he is a master. *Mendelssohn.*

From my childhood, whenever my art could be serviceable to poor suffering humanity, I have never required anything beyond the heartfelt gratification that it always caused me. *Beethoven.*

We live in this world in order always to learn industriously, and to enlighten each other by means of discussion, and to vigorously promote the progress of science and the fine arts. *Mozart.*

We ought to appreciate whatever is good wherever it is to be found, or in however small a proportion it may exist in every piece. *C. P. E. Bach.*

Art has no fatherland, and all that is beautiful ought to be prized by us, no matter what clime or region has produced it. *Weber.*

A work of art can become the language of culture, and reproducing art can fulfill its task. The work of art must dive into the spirit of the reproducing artist to be born anew from the gloom of spontaneous feeling. The form should not sound, but the spirit speak! Then is the virtuoso the high-priest of art, in whose mouth the dead letter wins life, whose lips reveal the secret of art. *Liszt.*

Beethoven! how much lies in that word! In the deep tone of the syllables there seems to sound a presentiment of immortality. I even think no other written characters, but these would suit his name. *Schumann.*

He who appears something must in reality be something. *Beethoven.*

A man of moderate talent will never rise above mediocrity, whether he travels or not; but a man of superior talents (which, without being unthankful to Providence, I cannot deny I possess) deteriorates if he always remains in one place. *Mozart.*

Artistic instruction must remain faithful to art, as the essence of its task. *Marx.*

In certain artists their works are their lives. *Liszt.*

The sound is in the execution of the pianist what color is in painting.
Gottschalk.

One must hear Italian music among the Italians; German music may be enjoyed under any heaven. *Schumann.*

There ought to be only one grand depot of art in the world to which the artist might repair with his works, and on presenting them receive what he requires; but as it now is, one must be half a tradesman besides; and how is this to be endured? *Beethoven.*

The student should be neither the slave nor the copyist of his teacher, but a free, and therewith an individual man. *Marx.*

What is genius else than a priestly power revealing God to the human soul? *Liszt.*

It is the artist's lofty mission to shed light on the human soul.
Schumann.

Music is a heavenly art, nothing supplants it except true love.

Berlioz.

And thus it always is with me,— I live ever in hope. *Mozart.*

The applause and enthusiasm of the public at large are no doubt our chief aim, but we are more truly invigorated and rewarded by the genuine approbation of those whose genius we prize, and who thoroughly understand and appreciate us. *Weber.*

The person who is unacquainted with the best things among literary productions is looked upon as uncultivated. We should be at least as advanced as this in music. *Schumann.*

We often mourn the paucity of good singers; good conductors are rarer still, and of far greater importance to a composer. *Berlioz.*

Mozart is always adorable! *Rossini.*

Instruction does not constitute art, but, on the contrary, is based upon it.

Marx.

Any one who has heard and studied a great deal that is good, ought to need no teacher to spur him on. The student should always bear in mind the greatest models, and emulate them, playing a great deal with accompaniment; he should become more and more familiar with masterpieces, and enter earnestly into a sense of their beauties; then the gradual development the pupil attains will place him above the common run of amateurs.

Moscheles.

In my opinion Bach is incomparably incommensurable. *Schumann.*

In no other art is demonstration so difficult as in music. Science fights with mathematics and logic; poetry wields the golden, decisive, spoken word; other arts have chosen nature, whose form they borrow as their judge; but music is an orphan, whose father and mother none can name, and perhaps in the mystery of her origin lies half her charm. *Schumann.*

I well know that God is nearer to me in my art than others. I commune with him without fear; ever more have I acknowledged and understood Him. *Beethoven.*

Truth lasts longest. *Mozart.*

No one does more than he knows, and no one knows more than he does.
Schumann.

A very rare genius is necessary for the creation of such works as the artists and the public alike comprehend at first sight, and whose simplicity brings them home to the masses like the Pyramids of Djizeh. *Berlioz.*

Mendelssohn is a man to whom I look up as to some lofty mountain. He is a true divinity; and no day passes in which he does not utter at least two ideas worthy to be graven on gold. *Schumann.*

Friends who have no religion cannot long be my friends. *Mozart.*

True talent always takes time captive. *Schumann.*

Génie oblige. *Liszt.*

The beautiful is only the reflection of the true; art is only the refraction of the thought. *Liszt.*

Artistic instruction must remain faithful to art, as the essence of its task. *Marx.*

The great purpose of all artistic instruction is :—

To recognize and develop the qualifications ;

To call to the aid of these the spiritual and mental faculties ;

To strengthen and elevate the whole man spiritually and bodily ;

To prepare his mind with the acquirements and knowledge which he requires for artistic life ;

To introduce to him all the beauties of art, and to make him familiar with all the practicable branches of artistic activity ;

In all operations to adhere to the nature of art, and to present artistically that which, although foreign to its nature, foreign to art, is necessary on account of its connection with it. *Marx.*

Architecture has been termed frozen music. Well, if you know what the pointed Gothic Arch is, you know what a fugue is ; for the pointed arch is the frozen fugue. In a contrapuntal work, fugues are like the final pointed completion of these arches in our Gothic cathedrals. Whenever a believing mood of mind strives upwards to the highest, whenever a last majestic result must be brought forward for numerical recognition the fugue becomes the most natural means of expression. *Ehlert.*

It is the curse of talent that although it labors more steadily and perseveringly than genius, it does not reach a goal; while genius, floating on the summit of the ideal, gazes above, serenely smiling. *Schumann.*

With some people one must proceed step by step. *Mozart.*

Truth for the wise,
Beauty for a feeling heart,
And both for each other. *Beethoven.*

Believe me, there is no greater delight than the completely uncritical frame of mind of the artist while creating. *Wagner.*

Talent labors; genius creates. *Schumann.*

It is difficult to believe that music, the essentially romantic art, can form a distinctly romantic school within it. *Schumann.*

To be able to criticise, one must understand; to be able to understand, one must feel. *Berlioz.*

Artificiality is not art; but how often are they mistaken for each other in our day. All art must rest on nature; for though the younger and more aspiring sister strives toward a more intellectual sphere, her very foundations are rooted in her predecessor. Can art exist independent of nature, — a world without a divinity? Yet how often is the God forgotten!

Henriette Voigt.

Publishers are like fishermen: not knowing what luck and accident may bring in, they cast their nets and catch the ordinary prey, big and little, until a heavy weight betrays the rare guest, one of the most precious treasures of the deep. *Schumann.*

A beautiful thing is effective even in a small form, as a charming idea delights us pronounced by the lips of a child. *Schumann.*

People say, "It pleased," or "It did not please." As if there were nothing higher than the art of pleasing the public! *Schumann.*

The æsthetic principle is the same in every art: only the material differs. *Schumann.*

The human voice is naturally tremulous, but only so far as to be beautiful; such is the nature of the voice, and it is imitated not only on wind but on stringed instruments, and even on the piano. But the moment the proper boundary is passed it is no longer beautiful, because it becomes unnatural.

Mozart.

I hate everything that bears the stamp of imitation; my views differ far too much from those of Beethoven ever to come in contact with him. The fiery, nay, almost incredible inventive faculty which inspires him is attended by so many complications in the arrangement of his ideas, that it is only his earlier compositions that interest me; the later ones, on the contrary, appear to me only a confused chaos, an unintelligible struggle after novelty, from which occasional heavenly flashes of genius dart forth, showing how great he might be if he chose to control his luxuriant fancy. *Haydn.*

Any effort made with honest intention in the direction of truth, will somewhere or at some time meet with deserved success, although the first aim should be a mistaken one. *Marx.*

We are never at an end with Bach; he seems to grow more profound the oftener he is heard. *Schumann.*

Great thoughts often circulate in similar words and tones through different minds. *Schumann.*

That musician especially who is inspired by nature, without copying her, breathes out in tones the tenderest secrets of his destiny ; he thinks, feels, and speaks through her. *Liszt.*

I live wholly in my music. *Beethoven.*

Beethoven developed the symphonic form to such comprehensive breadth, and filled it with contents of such unprecedentedly various and ravishing melody, that we stand to-day before the symphony of Beethoven as before the stone that marks the boundary of an entirely new period in the general history of art; for in it, there came into the world a phenomenon, nothing even approaching which is to be found in the art of any age or any nation. For in the symphony there is spoken by musical instruments a language of which no one in any preceding age had any knowledge inasmuch as the pure musical expression in it enchains the hearer with a lasting effect hitherto unknown, in the most inconceivably varied shades of tone, and wins his inmost nature with a strength unattainable by any other art. *Wagner.*

We can never make others accept our whole belief perforce.

Schumann.

Dare talent permit itself to take the same liberties as genius? Yes; but the former will perish where the latter triumphs. *Schumann.*

To comprehend art not as a convenient means for egotistical advantages and unfruitful celebrity, but as a sympathetic power which unites and binds men together; to educate one's own life to that lofty dignity which floats before talent as an ideal; to open the understanding of artists to what they should and can do; to rule public opinion by the noble ascendency of a higher and thoughtful life; and to kindle and nourish in the minds of men that enthusiasm for the beautiful which is nearly allied to the good,—that is the task which the artist has to set before him. . . . *Liszt.*

I have taken the trouble to compose singing-music for the piano, for I think music ought to touch the heart. The piano-player who merely thrums and drums with no regard to feeling, cannot succeed in this according to my idea. *J. S. Bach.*

A musician is also a poet. *Beethoven.*

So long as genius exists it matters but little how it appears, whether in the depths as with Bach, or on the heights as with Mozart, or in the depths and on the heights at once as with Beethoven. *Schumann.*

The masses in a natural state have an ear for music, if it corresponds with a healthy, natural, and purely human sentiment. Through nothing can we exercise a greater influence upon the people than through noble music. *Thibaut.*

Three trifles are essential for a good piano or singing teacher,—

The finest taste,
The deepest feeling,
The most delicate ear;

and in addition, the requisite knowledge, energy, and some practice.

Wieck.

Art springs in its earliest beginnings from religion, and returns to it in its highest development. *Ambros.*

No one has ever felt more devoutly than Bach, more happily than Mozart, or with more gigantic power than Beethoven. *Kullak.*

The feelings of the soul are the substance of music — material which is equally available for all artists. Now, this does not represent mind as having only a vague, external connection with technical principles, as a something fleeting and vanishing. Mind and substance are indispensable to music; the succession of sounds is the direct expression of them, the thing itself, and not mere form. Nevertheless, the whole life of music rests on a real psychological basis, and we have no more combinations of sound to deal with. *Brendel.*

The disciples of Pythagoras made music their study. The art was to them a means to arouse the spirit to noble deeds. According to his philosophy the soul consists of harmonic tones, and through music he believed the original harmony of the spiritual power could be re-established. *Merz.*

When will people learn to keep their eyes fixed upon the truth which lies so near at hand? Art does not live in the outer world, but in the inner world of the mind, manifesting itself outwardly. *Marx.*

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